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ISRAEL/PALESTINE MISSION NETWORK of the PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, U.S.A.

## STATEMENT ON GAZA

January 7, 2009

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The Israel Palestine Mission Network of the Presbyterian Church (USA) condemns in the harshest terms possible the Israeli massacre of Palestinians now underway in Gaza. This long-planned and all-too indiscriminate slaughter of hundreds of civilians, the wounding of thousands, and the destruction of homes, hospitals, schools, mosques and economic infrastructure cannot be justified in the name of Israeli national security.

The numbers simply do not add up: In the past eight years 20 Israeli have been killed by Hamas rockets while in the past three years over 1700 Palestinians in Gaza have been killed by the Israeli military, including the 600 men, women, and children who have died so far in this most recent attack. Hundreds more have died as a result of the Israeli embargo on medicine, food and fuel. The sheer disproportion of death and destruction is an affront to the conscience of humanity. This blatant collective punishment mocks international law as well as the Geneva Conventions. It is morally repugnant to us and the rest of the world.

Despite the usual "blaming" justifications given for this incursion, there are other truths about Israel's actions that need to be told:

- Israel, not Hamas, broke the truce\*, and has long used its own missiles to assassinate Palestinian leaders, often with family-destroying "collateral damage."
- The attacks on Gaza coincide with a heated Israeli political campaign in which leaders of the Labor and Kadima Parties must appear to the electorate to be as tough as the Likud Party led by Benjamin Netanyahu.
- The current United States government has become complicit in this tragedy by supporting Israel's justifications for its actions and by—alone in the nations of the UN Security Council—blocking the international demand for a ceasefire.
- The timing reflects a desire to limit the restoration of human rights and international diplomacy promised by the incoming Obama Administration.

The Israel Palestine Mission Network of the Presbyterian Church (USA), in accordance with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, stands with the victims of this atrocious massacre. We condemn violence committed by both sides, but cannot turn a blind eye to the disproportionate amount of suffering on the Palestinian side of this equation. The simple fact is that the firing of the most lethal, hi-tech weapons on earth into an embargoed walled-in Gaza by Israeli forces is tantamount to what is crudely known as "shooting fish in a barrel."

We call upon the government of the United States of America to support an immediate cease-fire within the United Nations and independently. We also call for a multi-national peacekeeping force to be installed as soon as possible, which is the standard that has been set anywhere else in the world following such a tragic humanitarian disaster. We call upon the Israeli government to allow UN peacekeeping forces with humanitarian assistance to enter into Gaza immediately.